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TO THE RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

JOHN, BISHOP OF CENTURIA,

VICAR APOSTOLIC of the SOUTHERN DISTRICT of ENGLAND: *Catholics of*

MY LORD.

WE have seen an ENCYCLICAL LETTER of the 19th day of last month signed by your Lordship, and the Apostolic Vicars of the Western and Northern Districts of England; we understand, it was publicly read from the Altar, in the Catholic Chapels in Moorfields and the Borough; * and that, applications were made to have it read in the same public manner in the Chapels of some of the Foreign Ministers.

It contains a censure of the Oath, published in the heads of the bill for the relief of Protestant Catholic Dissenters, even with the alterations supposed by your Lordships to have been made in it, since that censure was past,—and a censure of our proceedings respecting it.

Permit us, my Lord, with the greatest deference and respect, to assure your Lordship, that your Encyclical Letter makes it evident to us, that your Lordships totally mistake the nature and operation of the bill in question, and have been totally misinformed of our proceedings.

Your Lordships seem to suppose, the Oath originated with the Committee: that, the appellation of protesting Catholic Dissenters is solicited by us; and that the three provisos, referred to by your Lordships letter, have the force of new laws, imposing penalties on Catholics to which they are not now subject; and that those provisos were inserted by our requisition. Your Lordships also seem to insinuate, that, we assume a right to determine

* The Committee have since been informed, that, the Encyclical Letter was not read in the Chapel in the Borough. But it was publicly read in the Chapel in Moorfields: It was also publicly read in the Chapel of the School at Brook-Green, Hammer-smith.

on the lawfulness of oaths, declarations, or other instruments, containing doctrinal matters.

We beg leave to assure your Lordship, that, nothing of this is true. We hoped our former letters to the English Catholics and the Vicars Apostolic, had removed all misconceptions on these heads.—But as we find, by your Lordship's Encyclical Letter, this has not been the case, we shall now trouble your Lordship with a further explanation of our conduct.

AS TO THE OATH'S ORIGINATING WITH US:

By the minutes of the Committee of the 19th of April 1788, your Lordship will find, that, our Secretary was then directed to prepare a draft of a bill, for the relief of the laws against the Catholics; and in our minutes of the 17th of the following December, he stated to the Committee, that, he had prepared a bill for Parliament, consisting of various clauses, which, if they all passed, would, in his opinion, place the English Catholics on a footing with the English Protestant Dissenters.

We send your Lordship an exact copy of this bill.—And this, my Lords, is the bill of the Committee. Your Lordship will find it contains no new oath; no appellation of protesting Catholic Dissenters; none of the provisoes. It recites the acts imposing the penalties and disabilities peculiar to Catholics; the oath of 1778; and exempts from those penalties and disabilities, the Catholics who had taken, or should thereafter take, the oath of 1778. This, my Lord, we repeat, is the bill of the Committee. Whatever deviations or alterations appear to have been made from this; none of them were devised or even thought of, by the Committee. All originated with others, and were received by us, not by choice, but necessity. Against many of them we have strove with the greatest earnestness and anxiety; and if we have at last acquiesced in them, it has been from a thorough conviction, that, all our hopes of relief depended upon our acquiescence.

To explain this further to your Lordship, we shall lay before you, a succinct narrative of the Protestation and the Oath.

By an unanimous resolution of a General Meeting of the English Catholics, on the 15th of May 1788, we were instructed to make an application to Parliament, for their relief, early in the next Sessions of Parliament.

The Protestation was received by a member of the Committee in the month of November 1788. The rank and situation of the person who proposed it, and several other circumstances, (with a detail of which it is unnecessary to trouble your Lordship,) made it absolutely necessary for us to enquire, whether the Catholics would or would not sign it. The member of the Committee, who received it, transmitted it, immediately, to the Secretary of the Committee, with directions to forward it immediately to the Vicars Apostolic, and request their opinion on the lawfulness of signing it. This was done;

done; but neither in the letter sent to the Secretary with the Protestation, nor in the letters written by him to the Vicars Apostolic, was there any thing said, or even intimated, respecting the lawfulness of it.

Your Lordship will find by our minutes, of the 17th December 1788, that, our Secretary then laid before us, the letters of the Vicar Apostolic of the Western District, and acquainted us with the sentiments of the late Vicar Apostolic of the London District upon the Protestation: That Mr. Berington informed us of the sentiments of the Vicar Apostolic of the Middle District upon it;—that, in consequence of this, the Protestation was altered by the Nobleman from whom we received it, and again directed to be transmitted to the Vicars Apostolic. It was afterwards signed by the Vicars Apostolic of the London, the Middle, and the Western Districts.—The late Vicar of the Northern District, in his answer, which we have now before us, testified his disapprobation of it, but without assigning any reason, and concluded by saying, that, “If it met the approbation of the other Vicars, he was very willing to state to them, his reasons for dissenting, when requested.” This, your Lordship must see, was certainly disclaiming, very pointedly, all further correspondence with us, upon the subject. However, a very short time afterwards he declared he should not oppose any persons signing it in his district; and a very short time after that, he authorized the late Vicar Apostolic of the London District, if necessary, to sign it for him.

Thus, your Lordships see the extreme deference and attention, which, throughout the whole course of this business, we have paid to the Apostolic Vicars. We never assumed to approve or disapprove of it, as far as related to doctrines. On receipt of the Protestation, we transmitted it to the Apostolic Vicars, and till they had not only approved it, but themselves signed it, or declared they should give no opposition to the signing of it, by the faithful of their respective districts, we neither signed it ourselves, nor proposed it to be signed by others.

All the Apostolic Vicars and their Coadjutors signed the Protestation; and, with few exceptions indeed, it was signed by all the Clergy, and by all the Laity of any consequence in the kingdom of England.

The signing of the Protestation was attended with the most salutary effects. So full, explicit, and unequivocal a declaration, from the whole body of the Catholics, of the integrity of their civil and political principles, had not appeared since the Reformation. It was a subject of national congratulation. Prejudices against them rapidly subsided, and as men and citizens, we found ourselves beginning to be restored to the confidence and affection of the public.

Struck with the happy prospect of the revolution, which the signing of the Protestation produced on the minds of the public, persons in power, who interested themselves in the behalf of the Catholics, thought it expedient, and required from us, that the Protestation should be altered to the form of an Oath, and substituted in the Bill, in lieu of the Oath of 1778. The business pressed; and the late Vicar of the London District declared himself competent

competent to pronounce upon it. The four Vicars and all their Coadjutors, and their Clergy had signed the Protestation, a solemn instrument, avowedly framed to be presented to the Legislature, and published to the nation. To an instrument of this solemnity what was wanting, but the form, to give it the essence, of an oath. In the face of God and the nation the Apostolic Vicars had signed it, could they have an objection to call God to witness a repetition of their signatures? This was all they would do when tendered to them as an Oath.

But what was in the power of the Committee they did.

Your Lordships will find by the minute of the 15th May, 1788, that it was resolved at the General Meeting of the Catholics on that day, that three Gentlemen of the Clergy should be chosen by the Meeting, to be added to the Committee to be balloted for immediately; that a ballot was immediately had; and that upon the ballot the numbers appeared to be in favour of the late Vicar Apostolic of the London District, Mr. Berington, and Mr. Wilks; from that time they were incorporated into the Committee and attended the meetings: they were of course informed of the proposal, to alter the Protestation to an Oath, and they saw no objection to it.

To this proposal the Committee therefore acceded:—this made it necessary to alter the Draft of the Bill, and it was altered accordingly. The Draft No. 2, of which we send a copy to your Lordship, is, except in those parts of it which are written in red ink, a copy of it in its altered form.

Thus altered, the Act was again shewn to some leading Members of Administration. It was taken to them by the Gentleman whose office it was to prepare the public Acts of Parliament. By them it was once more altered. They told the Gentleman, through whom the Bill was transmitted to them, that an uniformity of Oaths throughout the kingdom was absolutely necessary; that the religious scruples of the Catholics made them refuse part of the Oath of Supremacy; but as they could have no religious objections, either to the other parts of the Oath of Supremacy, or to any part of the Oath of Allegiance, or the Oath of Abjuration; they required, that the whole of the Oaths of Allegiance and Abjuration, and as much of the Oath of Supremacy as Catholics do not think contrary to faith, should be inserted in the Oath to be taken by them. A more explicit avowal, also seemed to them necessary, of our resolution not to disturb the Ecclesiastical Establishment of the kingdom. Some words therefore they inserted for that purpose. Upon this requisition the Gentleman in question made the alterations, in red ink in the draft of the Bill, No. 2. Previously to that, he had, upon the requisition of a person, whom he said it was essential to satisfy, inserted the clause, written in black ink, on the back of the last page but one.

Thus the Bill was altered a second time. Your Lordships will find by our Minutes of the 26th June, 1789, that it was then returned to us, with a declaration from the Gentleman holding the official situation above-mentioned, (and also by the very respectable Gentleman who has undertaken to move our Bill in the House of Commons) that it came, as
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nearly as possible to the ideas of the high personages therein mentioned, consistently with the principles of Catholics.

Here then, for the moment, was the ultimatum of Government. We conferred upon it with the three ecclesiastical Members of the Committee. Your Lordship will find, by the Minutes of the 19th of November 1789, that they all approved of it; and in particular the late Vicar Apostolic of the London District kept it by him for two days, and then returned it to the Committee, with a verbal declaration, that he saw in it nothing contrary to faith or good morals. We can assure your Lordship, that, his expressions were even stronger than the account inserted of them in the Minutes we have the honor to send you. The Committee recollected he added, that, he saw nothing in the Oath, that a Catholic might not safely take.

Here, my Lord, let us pause. The Protestation was sanctioned by all the Apostolic Vicars; but originated with a stranger: the Oath was the work of Government: the Bill was framed by them: all has been imposed on us, we have given in nothing:—yet this giving in is the first charge brought against us, by your Lordship's Encyclical Letter.

In the following October, the Vicars Apostolic published the first Encyclical Letter. Without assigning one reason, without even pointing out one exceptionable passage, the Oath was, by that Letter, declared to be unlawful, and our submission to the mandate was required.

Thus, this Oath, which, upon the requisition of government, and, with the most explicit sanction of our Bishop, we had signified to be admissible; an Oath, which, in its effects and tendency, is a mere profession of temporal allegiance, and repetition of that protestation, which all the Vicars with their co-adjutors and clergy, had signed but a few months before, that every Oath, my Lord, was pronounced altogether unlawful; and the Vicar Apostolic of the Western district, by his printed letter of the 24th of December, 1789, accused us of an attempt to injure religion; and the Vicar Apostolic of the Northern district, in his Pastoral Letter, talked of our infernal stratagems.

In allowing the admissibility of the Oath, we might, my Lord, be mistaken. If we were, it was in common with our late venerable pastor, the Vicar Apostolic of the London district; with many clergymen of the most exemplary lives, of the most distinguished learning and piety, whose eloquence and writings are at once, the support and the ornament of the remains of English catholicity. Yet, even these might err. But in what could be founded the atrocious charge of an attempt to injure religion? Or the atrocious imputation of infernal stratagems? This remains for your Lordships to explain. It was not in our attention to submit the protestation, as soon as received, to the Vicars Apostolic. In our forbearance from circulating it till we had their permission, in associating with us the late Vicar Apostolic of the London district; in advising with him on the Oath as finally settled; in following his example, in allowing its admissibility;—What more than this could have been expected from the most docile members of Christ's Church?

My Lord, in your Encyclical Letter of the 19th of last month, you have informed the Catholics of your district, that, the four Apostolic Vicars by their Encyclical Letter, dated October 21st, 1789, condemned the Oath, proposed at that time, to be presented to Parliament. But permit us, my Lord, to ask, if this is a fair statement of that circumstance. Your Lordship must unquestionably have heard, that, of the four prelates who signed this censure, two signified their most earnest wish, that, the publication of it should be suspended, and never could be induced to publish it in their respective districts. Now permit us, my Lord, to declare, that, no censure, or other judicial sentence, has any effect till it is published. This is admitted equally by canonists and civilians. The Encyclical Letter of the 21st of October, 1789, was never published either in the London, or the Middle districts. How far from this circumstance it lost its integrity, and consequently its validity, even in the two districts where it was published, will certainly admit of doubt,—but surely the truth of history requires, that, when that censure is mentioned, this remarkable circumstance attending it, should not be forgotten.

We thought ourselves called upon to answer the Encyclical Letter of the 21st October, 1789. We did it by two letters, one addressed to all our Catholic brethren;—the other, particularly addressed to the four Apostolic Vicars. In the former, we gave a succinct history of our proceedings, and a short statement of the objections made to the Oath, and our answers to them.—In the latter, we replied, in terms of the most respectful deference, to the objections taken by the Vicar Apostolic of the Western District to the Oath.

In the February following, we solicited an interview with the Vicars Apostolic. The late Vicar Apostolic of the London District was then no more. The Vicar Apostolic of the Northern District refused to attend the meeting, or to depute any persons to attend it in his stead.—The Vicars Apostolic of the Middle and Western Districts, and their respective co-adjutors, attended. Being called upon to declare, in what they thought the Oath reprehensible, the Vicar Apostolic of the Western District, was understood by all present, to concede, that, it contained nothing heretical. This, however he has since denied. But being urged over and over again, to point out the objectionable passages, he declined it, and contented himself with denying to the assembly, any right to require him to inform them of the parts of the Oath he thought censurable, or his reasons for thinking them such. The Vicar Apostolic of the Middle District held a conduct totally opposite. He declared his only objection to the Oath, was the alteration from the Protestation in that clause, which relates to the right of the Pope, or the Church, to interfere with the temporal or ecclesiastical government of the country, as by law established. That being restored, he declared he should no longer have any objection to the Oath, as it then stood.—With this alteration, the Oath in full was unanimously agreed to, with the exception of the dissent of the Vicar Apostolic of the Western District, and his co-adjutors, declining to give any opinion on the subject. We beg leave to add, that
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the Vicar Apostolic of the Middle District publicly declared, that in signing the condemnation of the Oath as it then stood, he did not mean to retract his signature of the Protestation;—that he had signed the Protestation deliberately, and would inviolably adhere to it. The candor and truly christian firmness and moderation, the Vicar Apostolic of the Middle District displayed upon this occasion, increased, if possible, the veneration and respect of the public for him, and it was a singular satisfaction to us, that at the last General Meeting of the Catholics, he was appointed unanimously to be of the Committee, in the room of his deceased venerable brother.

At that meeting, we had the honor of an unanimous vote of thanks, for what the meeting was pleased to call our judicious and able exertions, to serve the Catholic cause; and we were instructed to go on with the Bill in its present state.

Here the business for the present rests. Permit us now to appeal to your Lordship's candor, whether it can be said or even insinuated, with any degree of truth, that the Oath originated with us.

As to our soliciting the appellation of protesting Catholic Dissenters:—The charge is equally unfounded. In the form in which the Bill was prepared by us, nothing of the kind was mentioned. In all our intercourse with government, we have ever styled ourselves Catholics. By that appellation we presented our address to the King and Queen, on his Majesty's happy recovery. By the same appellation we prepared our petition, and should have presented it to Parliament, but we were assured by high authority in the House of Peers, it could not be admitted.

Another circumstance mentioned in the last Encyclical Letter, as a reason for pronouncing the Oath to be unlawful, is the three provisos enacted towards the end of the Act.

But do your Lordships assume to say, that because the legislature will not repeal all the laws against the Catholics, it is therefore contrary to faith or to morals, that the Catholics should solicit an exemption from some of them. Yet this consequence, extravagant as it is, necessarily follows. Not one of the provisos has the operation of a new law; they only operate to restrain the general operation of the first clause of the Bill. Suppose the laws against the Catholics to amount in number to sixty. Might not a Catholic, without being guilty of heresy or immorality, solicit an exemption from fifty of them? Suppose then for a moment, a Bill to pass repealing, by the first clause, all the laws, without any limitation or exception; but with a proviso at the end, that nothing contained in the first clause, should extend to ten specified laws. Would it be sinful for a Catholic to solicit a Bill of this nature? This, my Lord, is exactly the case with the Bill now under consideration. The first clause exempts us from all the laws against us of a particular description; the provisos except some particular laws out of this general exemption. With your Lordships, we lament the insertion of these provisos. We go much farther; we also lament the insertion of the others. But we cannot think, that either God or
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his Church will deem us guilty of heresy or immorality, in soliciting or availing ourselves of a bill, in which they are inserted.—After the explanation of the nature of these provisos, which we gave in the letter we before had the honor to address to the Vicars Apostolic, we confess ourselves somewhat surprised at a repetition of this charge.

It adds to our wonder, when we consider, that, the Act passed for our relief in 1778, (to which the Vicars Apostolic have so often referred, as the model for us to follow,) is in this respect equally censurable as the present;—That act contains a proviso, restraining its operation from suits then depending. Our wonder increases upon us, when we read the acts past for the relief of the Irish Catholics. The three provisos referred to by your Lordships, are those, which relate to the education of children, and to what the law calls superstitious uses. The Irish act contains provisos restraining its operation from protestants relapsing to popery, or educating their children in the popish religion. But notwithstanding these clauses, the oath prescribed by this very act, was taken by the whole body of Irish Catholics, and approved of by the whole of their respectable hierarchy: And their conduct was defended by his Grace, the most pious and learned Archbishop of Cashel. We have the honor to send your Lordship copies of the Irish Act.

In your 5th article or determination, your Lordships declare, that, the Catholic Committee, has no right, or authority to determine, on the lawfulness of oaths, or declarations, or other oaths, or instruments containing doctrinal matters. By this, your Lordships unquestionably insinuate, that, we have arrogated to ourselves this power or authority. We beg leave, my Lord, to meet this charge with a most positive denial of it; We have never claimed it.

In the minutes of the General Meeting of the 19th of February 1788, your Lordships will find, that, Lord Petre there declared, before the whole Meeting, that “an idea had prevailed that the Committee had undertaken to interfere in matters of a nature merely spiritual. That, the only instance, in which the Committee could be thought to have done this, was, in their deliberations, whether it would be for the benefit of religion, that, the Vicars Apostolic should be Ordinaries; that, the first step they had taken in this concern, was to write to the Vicars themselves upon it.—That the affair rested there, and that they had interfered in no other matter of a spiritual nature.”

Upon the same principle, when a public service was performed for the restoration of his Majesty's health, we desired our Secretary to procure a sufficient number of copies of the thanksgiving appointed to be said for the recovery of his Majesty, and to have them distributed at the door of the Chapel, on the day of the solemnity. But, consistently with our avowed principle of never interfering in spiritual concerns, we expressly directed our Secretary to consult with Mr. Talbot upon it. You will find an account of this in the minutes of our proceedings of the 18th of March 1789.

My Lord, to accuse, is not to prove. On our parts, we have here produced to your Lordship, a most unequivocal instance of our forbearance from interfering in spiritual concerns:

cerns; And we know it to be impossible for your Lordships, to adduce one single instance of proof, to support the charge in question; though, perhaps, the most invidious that could have been devised.

It is painful for us to enter into a discussion of this nature with your Lordships. At all times, we have been ready to meet the Apostolic Vicars; to inform them of our proceedings; to confer and co-operate with them for the public good. Why then, my Lord, precipitate matters? Why circulate this defamatory mandate? Have the faithful been edified by it? Has it served the cause of religion? Has it recommended Catholics to the favour of the nation? To those very Chapels, from the altars of which your last Encyclical Letter was promulgated, more than one of us have largely contributed.

Your Lordship has now, before you, a candid detail of our proceedings, and copies of the original minutes, respecting them. Before the great Searcher of Hearts, we now solemnly ask your Lordship, whether, on the view you now have of the bill, and our conduct respecting it, it appears to your Lordship, that, the principles of the bill, or our conduct respecting it, are such, as your Lordship has proclaimed them to be;—Your Lordship must we think confess they are not. An amicable conference of a few minutes would have saved your Lordship, the misfortune of having brought charges against us, which you must perceive are unfounded; and have saved us, the painful necessity of a defence.

On the 31st of last December our Secretary formally assured your Lordship, “ That we should not return till the time of the Meeting of Parliament, and that until that time, nothing would be done respecting the bill. That, as soon as we came to town, we would give your Lordship the earliest information of it, and would be happy to shew every attention in our power to any thing you might think proper to suggest to us.” Two noble members of the Committee had given your Lordship similar information.—On Friday * ten’night our Secretary informed your Lordship, there would be a sufficient number of the Committee, to assemble on the 25th, and that they would procure a meeting between your Lordship and them the following day. That day your Lordship thought proper to anticipate.

* This is a mistake—the letter in question was dated and sent on the 23d of last January, which did not fall on the Friday, but the Saturday. The Committee afterwards wrote to the Vicar Apostolic of the London District, to rectify this error.—It has since appeared, that the letter in question was not sent till the Encyclical Letter was circulated.—But neither the writer, nor the Right Reverend Gentleman by whose approbation it was written, were apprised of this, at the time the letter was sent.—Parliament met on the 2d of February. That the Committee would be in town then,—and that, till then, nothing would be done, the Vicar Apostolic of the London District had been informed by Lord Stourton and Lord Petre, and by the Secretary’s letter of the 31st of December.

The only reason assigned for this, was, your Lordship had been given to understand that the papers were before Government. They have been before Government since the end of the last Sessions but one, at which time, under the sanction of the Protestation, and with the authority of the late Vicar Apostolic of the London District, we informed Government, the Oath was admissible. Upon this, the Oath was taken out of our hands. It was then the property of Government. It was in their possession, and we could not alter it. We might still negotiate and endeavour to bring about any alterations. But it depended on Government to receive or reject them. Not one letter was at our command. Every alteration in the Oath, we knew would retard, and might endanger the progress of the bill. We must therefore know, it would be highly imprudent in us to attempt unnecessary alterations. Alterations founded on misconception and misapprehension, could not but appear to us unnecessary. But when the respectable Meeting of the 3d day of February 1790, recommended an alteration; we negotiated it with Government; and we negotiated it, because it appeared to some a material, as it certainly was a verbal, deviation from the Protestation. But if alterations would satisfy their Lordships, why were they not proposed to us from the Meeting of the Vicars Apostolic in October 1789? Did their Lordships, at that Meeting, agree to countenance or reject alterations? The Vicar Apostolic of the Western District, in his letter addressed to four members of the Committee, used these very words: "To form a new Oath would be a vain attempt. For in the first place, our people, having taken the oath of 1778, are averse to take another, and cry out against having a second forced upon them. Then it would be, in all appearance, impossible to frame such an oath as would satisfy all parties; such an oath as our Catholics would take, and at the same time, such as would satisfy Ministers, &c.

No deviation from the Protestation can now be pointed out. This Protestation was signed by six Bishops, by more than two hundred of the Clergy out of the four districts, and by almost every name respectable among the Catholics of England. To this Protestation, this solemn pledge of our integrity, as Men, Christians, and Catholics, we think ourselves bound to adhere. The other parts of the Oath consist of a declaration of fidelity to our King and our country, and a profession of allegiance to his Majesty and his successors, according to the act of settlement. We assert by it, our belief of the imperial sovereignty of the kingdom of Great Britain; and our belief, that, the deposing power claimed by some ill advised Popes, is contrary to the revelation of Christ. We therefore say, we believe it to be heretical. That, it is contrary to scripture, to tradition, and the practice of the Church, we have the solemn declaration of the whole Gallican Church; nor do your Lordships deny it.—As to the qualifying term, "*heretical*," we have the authority of two Consultations of the Sorbonne, one in 1680, and the other in 1775. This is the whole substance of the Oath: Here it rests. It leaves to conscience, the rights of conscience; to the church, the rights of the church; to the successor of St. Peter, the rights of his Holy Apostolic See.

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We conclude by transcribing the words of one of the most able and most upright lawyers this kingdom ever produced; and one of the greatest friends the Catholics of this kingdom ever had. "A State or Constitution (these are his very words) has the rights of self-defence, as well as an individual; and it is competent to each Community to make such regulations, and to stipulate such conditions, as appear, on their best consideration, to produce the greatest good, and to avert the most evil, from society.—The most usual, and perhaps the most unexceptionable, is, an oath of fidelity to the state. For no man has a right to remain in, and be protected by, the laws of any community, that is plotting its destruction. On this simple and plain ground, I think every legislature ought to proceed; and I trust, that it will be thought neither injurious to the civil rights, nor offensive to the consciences of peaceable Catholics, to comply with it. Pretending to no subtle casuistry, I cannot well see, how any man who can take the oath of 1778, can rationally object to the proposed Oath."

In the above, we have given your Lordship a full and candid account of our proceedings. We beg your Lordship will do us the honor to give it an attentive perusal: and when your Lordship has given it the consideration you think it deserves, we beg you will do us the honor to appoint a time when we may meet your Lordship, and give your Lordship any further information. But we beg leave to mention to your Lordship, that, as Parliament is now met it will be necessary to fix on a very early day.

MY LORD,

With the greatest respect,

Feb. 2, 1791.

we have the honor to be

YOUR LORDSHIP'S

Most obedient and most humble Servants,

CHARLES BERINGTON.

STOURTON.

JOS. WILKS.

PETRE.

HENRY CHARLES ENGLEFIELD.

JOHN THROCKMORTON.

JOHN TOWNELEY.

THOMAS HORNYOLD.

[illegible]

To the Right Reverend CHARLES, LORD BISHOP of RAMA, Vicar Apostolic of the Western District;—WILLIAM, LORD BISHOP of ACANTHOS, Vicar Apostolic of the Northern District;—JOHN, LORD BISHOP of CENTURIA, Vicar Apostolic of the Southern District, of England:

MY LORDS,!

THE Bill, for the Relief of the English Catholics, being soon to be brought into the House of Commons, and your Lordships persisting in declaring the Oath enjoined to be taken by that Bill, (—a Copy of which Oath is annexed to this Instrument,—) to be unlawful—WE the underwritten, CLERGY and LAITY, appointed under an unanimous resolution of the General Meeting of the English Catholics, on the 3d day of May 1787, (convened after a public and printed notice universally circulated,) to be a COMMITTEE to watch over and promote the public interests of the English Catholics, think it incumbent upon us to present to your Lordships, *this*, our SOLEMN DECLARATION and PROTESTATION.

If the Oath contained an avowal of any point of doctrine or morals contrary to the belief of the Catholic Church, we should think it criminal in us, either to contend for its admissibility, in the present stage of the business, or to take it at a future time, if it should pass into a law.—For born and educated in the Catholic Church, we acknowledge ourselves bound by her decrees, and whatever is of faith, by the express word of Christ, or the tradition of his Church, we acknowledge it our duty to believe.

In common with every Church, in communion with the See of Rome, we acknowledge the Supremacy of the Pope. This, in the printed Case, delivered by us to the members of both Houses of Parliament, previously to any mention of our Bill in the House of Commons, we declared in the most explicit and unequivocal terms.

Before this,—having occasion to write to the Minister, on the 9th of May 1788, respecting his requisition to have the opinions of foreign Catholics on the Pope's dispensing power,—we sent him the treatise, intitled, "ROMAN CATHOLIC PRINCIPLES in Reference to GOD and the COUNTRY," and accompanied it by a letter, in which we signified it

to be a summary of our tenets, which we assured him we were persuaded every Catholic would readily subscribe to.

The 5th article of the second section of this treatise is, in the following words :

" Catholics believe, that, the Bishop of Rome, successor of Saint Peter, is the

" Head of the Catholic Church, in which sense this Church may therefore fitly

" be styled Roman Catholic, being an universal body united under one visible

" Head."

Two hundred copies of this treatise have been distributed, by our direction, among members of the Established Church and Protestant Dissenters.

Thus publicly we have acknowledged ourselves members of the Catholic Church, and professed our belief of her doctrines, particularly that of the Pope's Supremacy. Neither national prejudice,—the fear of avowing ourselves objects of the many oppressive laws still remaining in force against us,—a timorous apprehension of the policy of the measure,—nor a caution, perhaps justifiable, of keeping from the public, what the public did not expressly call upon us to proclaim, withheld us from this open and unreserved declaration of our principles.—We were sensible of the duty owing by us to our divine Legislator, of confessing him and his church before men; at the same time we knew that none of our religious principles were incompatible with our duty, as men and citizens: we made no scruple, therefore, of proclaiming, thus publicly, before God and the nation, the integrity of our religious principles; and having satisfied this obligation, we thought ourselves not only justified, but from the circumstances of the times, actually bound in duty to declare, with equal publicity, the integrity of our political principles.—With this view, under the sanction of all the Vicars Apostolic and all their Coadjutors, and upwards of two hundred of the Clergy, (the London Clergy particularly having been for that purpose regularly convened by their Bishop,) we signed the Protestation, and it was signed by almost every other Catholic of England of any respectability. Having given to God and the nation these two solemn pledges both of our religious and our political integrity, shame be upon those who dare to call in question either the one or the other:—we scorn the slander:—we know we are good Catholics, and good subjects.

We have apprized your Lordships of every thing respecting the business, in its progress to its present stage. Your Lordships know, that, the Oath, when first altered from the Protestation, received the deliberate approbation of the late venerable Vicar of the London District; and that, as it now stands, it received, on the 3d of February 1790, the approbation of his most respectable brother, the Vicar Apostolic of the Middle District, in the presence of 19 Clergymen.

Still your Lordships denounce it to be unlawful to take the Oath; and you have publicly assumed to yourselves, to inhibit the flocks you are sent to govern from taking it; " and from taking any new oath or signing any new declaration on doctrinal matters:—or " subscribing any new instrument, wherein the interests of religion are concerned," (—are your

your Lordships aware of the monstrous latitude of that expression?) "without the previous" approbation of their respective Bishop."

My Lords, if Christ enjoins submission, he enjoins it when submission is reasonable : ---and submission must ever be unreasonable, when it is not preceded by instruction and reason.---Following the precept of her Divine Master, the Church of God, in tender regard to the weakness of her children, has generally condescended to conciliate,---has always thought herself bound to instruct.---It is a rule with her, that the lowest of her children should know of what he is accused, before he is judged; and be permitted to defend himself, before he is condemned.

Such, my Lords, is the spirit of our Divine Master; and such, conformably to his precepts, is the practice of his Church.---How widely different have been the proceedings of your Lordships! That Oath, which but a few months ago, under the sanction of a most deliberate and explicit approbation of our pastor, we had signified to be admissible;---that Oath, which was grounded on the Protestation signed, but a few month ago, by all the Vicars Apostolic, all their Coadjutors, and with few exceptions indeed, by all their Clergy;---that Oath, my Lords, without a specification of one single objectionable clause, was pronounced by your Lordships to be unlawful, and our conduct respecting it censured.

Thus, my Lords, in our regard, no preliminaries, either of form or of right, were attended to. No measure of conciliation was used,---no instruction was vouchsafed.---In which of the articles of the Oath, the error, attributed to it, lay, was not pointed out to us; we were not permitted to explain it;---no opportunity was given us to defend our conduct.---Is it possible to suppose your heavenly Master inspired a conduct so opposite to his own spirit, of prudence, meekness, conciliation and justice; or that your Lordships spoke the language of the Church, when you acted in a manner so little conformable to its practice?

My Lords, this is not all.---The same anathema, which is denounced, in the scripture, against those who take from the word of God, is denounced against those who add to it.---We know the Gospel enjoins us to submit to the dogmatical decisions of the Church; we also know the Gospel does not oblige us to admit as faith the bare assertions of three only of its Ministers. Individual Prelates, even National Councils may err; the Church alone is infallible. Respectable for your exemplary piety, your missionary zeal, and your many other moral and religious endowments, your Lordships are entitled to the utmost attention and respect. The utmost attention and respect we have ever paid, and shall ever pay you. When you deliver to us the solemn decisions of the Church, when you exhort, persuade, or instruct, we know you are within the sphere of your pastoral duty, and we listen with reverence to the language of the gospel and tradition. But when you deliver mysterious oracles, and undertake to silence reason and preclude discussion, by the mere authority of your Encyclical Letters, we cannot but recollect, that God and the whole collective body of the Church alone, are possessed of the right of propounding articles of belief.

Thus

Thus wandering from your proper direction, we are not surprized at your errors. We see without surprize, but with much real concern, that you are quite mistaken in your notions and statements of the principles of the Bill, and of our conduct respecting it;—that you sign the Protestation one day, retract it the next;—formally disapprove of provisos in the intended Act, and forget that more exceptionable provisos were inserted in the Act passed for the relief of the Irish Catholics, in 1778.

Surely, my Lords, when your Lordships act with so much precipitancy, when you shew such little attention to the forms or the substance of justice, when you shew yourselves so unconversant with the subjects on which you pronounce your determinations so decisively; when there is so much contradiction in your opinions, and so much disagreement among yourselves; it is possible to call in question the irrefragability of your articles and determinations without incurring the guilt of heresy, schism, or disobedience. For it is evident, under these circumstances, you are not to be considered as the Church: you are but a part of the Church: as such, you are entitled to attention and respect.—But where reason is not satisfied, where conviction has not preceded, God and the collective body of his Church alone, have a right to require submission: when, under these circumstances, it is required by any other, it cannot be that rational submission which Christ authorizes his ministers to require: and when there is so great a misapprehension of authority, there cannot but be a strong presumption, that there is an equal misapprehension of the subject to which it is applied.

To support your Lordships' requisition to submission, the only argument brought by your Lordships is, that "you are the Vicars Apostolic of this country;—are therefore the " highest ecclesiastical authority in this country; your decrees, therefore, 'till they are " reversed by an higher authority, in this country, must be submitted to."

Permit us, my Lords, to enquire if your Lordships seriously considered the above proposition before you asserted it? The constitution of the Church and the histories of every age, and almost every realm of Christendom, prove its erroneousness.

* In the year 519, under the pontificate of Pope Hormisdas, a dispute arose on the proposition, "One of the Trinity has been crucified for our salvation." The affirmative was supported by the Monks of Scythia; Pope Hormisdas was consulted upon it:—he severely censured the Monks for maintaining it; he called them obstinate and turbulent men, that despised the authority of the Holy Fathers; complained he could not stop their extravagancies by his admonitions, his mildness, or his authority, and said, they ought to be shunned. About 12 years after, Pope John the II. pronounced in favour of their proposition, and the whole Church acquiesced in his decision. But permit us, my Lords, to ask, whether, during the interval between the censure of Hormisdas and the approbation of John, ratified by the subsequent consent of the Universal Church, it was lawful for any Christian, of any part of the world, to deny the lawfulness of the proposition in ques-

* See the *Défense de la Déclaration de l'Assemblée du Clergé de France*,—particularly lib. 9.

tion, though the unlawfulness of it was maintained by the Bishop of Rome, the highest authority, except that of the Universal Church, in the Christian world.

In 633, Cyrus, Patriarch of Alexandria, the first of the Monothelites, published a decree, in which he laid it down, that in Jesus Christ there was but one operation of the will. This doctrine was received by Sergius, the Patriarch of Constantinople. Sophronius, afterwards Patriarch of Jerusalem, rejected this profane novelty with horror. The Patriarch Sergius sent an account of this to Pope Honorius :---the Pope, in his answer, approves of the conduct and doctrine of Sergius, and finishes his letter, by saying, "Preach these things with us, as we preach them with you." But the doctrine thus maintained by two Patriarchs and a Pope, was afterwards condemned by the 6th General Council in 682.---We therefore ask,---During the years which elapsed between the decree of Cyrus, and the condemnation of the 6th General Council, was it lawful for an Alexandrian, a Constantinopolitan, or a Roman to maintain the position in question, though most solemnly proposed to his faith by the highest spiritual authority of the country?

We shall trouble your Lordships but with one more instance.

Your Lordships are apprized of the ravages which the heresy of Arius made in the Christian empire; in so much, that (to use the expression of one of the Fathers) the universe was astonished at finding herself become Arian,---How many Bishops, Archbishops and Patriarchs,---how many Provincial Councils and Synods, authorized by their example and their decrees this unhappy heresy! To complete the calamity, Pope Liberius yielded to it, by signing the confession of Sirmium, and abandoning St. Athanasius, whose cause was then inseparable from that of the faith.---Might not each of these unhappy Prelates have addressed their respective flocks in the language you have addressed us?---Might not they have said to them, "we are the highest ecclesiastical authority of the district in which you reside: till our decisions are reversed by a still higher authority, it is your duty to submit to us?" But would this, my Lords, have justified the flock in obeying their decisions? Would it have justified them in denying the divinity of Christ? You see the consequence to which your position leads.---We are persuaded you will urge it no longer.

You may say, that in all the cases we have mentioned, if some Bishops and some Clergy maintained the unlawful propositions, there were other Bishops and other Clergy who opposed them. But is this not so with us? Did not the late Vicar Apostolic of the London District approve of the Oath without the Alteration? Has not the Vicar Apostolic of the Middle District approved of the Oath with the alteration? Have they not been joined by several of the Clergy, the most eminent for their learning, their piety, and other missionary endowments? Is it not supported by most of the families, from whom religion, in this country, derives the greatest succours? This is not the case of an individual acting in opposition to the Bishop. With so great a weight of authority against you, conciliation and instruction were particularly to be expected from you. Is it possible to suppose a case where they were more called for? where there was less reason, or less right, to require

that blind submission, you have required from us? In short you have spoken,---the Church has not.

Of the firm and conscientious adherence of the Right Reverend Vicar Apostolic of the Middle District, to his opinion of the lawfulness of the Oath, as it now stands, we have received the following HONORABLE TESTIMONY.

Dear Sir,

You request to know our opinion of what passed in the public conversation at Longbitch yesterday. We can have but one opinion.

"Mr. T. Talbot, repeatedly in the most unequivocal manner, declared, that he approved of the Oath in its present form; which form, agreeably to his own requisition, had been accepted in a public meeting on the 3d of February, 1790: that, from that approbation, he should not recede. That, when in a letter he lately addressed to Mr. Gibson, in London; he spoke of having condemned the Oath, he meant the Oath as it was originally worded, for that he could not mean to say, he had condemned what he had publicly approved.—That he even lamented the measures in the condemnation of the first Oath, had been so precipitately conducted:—That, he thought it unnecessary at this time, to give any new formal approbation of the present Oath, because his former declaration, he knew, was on the minutes of the Committee, and must be publicly known. That, he apprehended besides, should he, (as we requested he would) give you a written approbation of the Oath, that it might still more irritate the minds of some men, and tend to widen the unhappy breach.—Finally, that he admired the temper, and great moderation of the gentlemen of the Committee, whose views he thought were most upright, and whose zeal to promote the cause of religion, and the interest of their Catholic brethren, merited the warmest commendation."

Such were Mr. Talbot's sentiments often expressed before us in the course of the day. And with regard to ourselves give us leave, Sir, on this occasion, to repeat to you our deliberate acquiescence in the words of the Oath; to lament the continuance of the opposition which is made to it; and to testify how much we applaud the general measures, which have been hitherto pursued by you, and the other gentlemen of our Committee, to obtain from Parliament a further redress of grievances.

With sincere regard, we remain,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate and humble Servants,

Longbitch, Feb. 15. 1791.

directed to the
R. Rev. C. Berington.

Anthony Clough, Joseph Berington,
Thomas Flyn, Edward Eyre,
George Beeston,

My

My Lords, your pretensions to authority in the manner you have exercised it, being thus set aside, your Decrees must necessarily sink, into mere matters of private opinion, and have no more weight than they derive from the internal, or external evidence of their truth.

The objections to the Oath, we have so fully discussed in our former publication, that we shall now say little on the subject. But permit us, my Lords, to say, one great error prevades all we have had the honor to see in writing, or to hear in discourse from your Lordships:—YOU CONCEIVE THE WORDS OF THE PROTESTATION AND THE OATH, ARE TO BE UNDERSTOOD IN THE MEANING THEY MIGHT HAVE IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE SCHOOLS.

Thus, my Lords, the words “a right to affect and interfere,” convey to your understandings, a right to affect and interfere by the spiritual operation of spiritual censures; and the word “persons,” appears to you synonymous with the “souls or consciences.” But no two things have less relation to one another, than the language of business, and the language of the schools. My Lords, it is indisputable, that an Oath must be taken in its plain and obvious sense.—Where a doubt arises on the plain and obvious sense of an Oath, it can only be ascertained by considering it in regard to the persons who propose it, the persons to whom it is proposed,—the subject of it,—and the end, to which it is intended to be applied. In the present case, every thing of this kind, is of a temporal nature.—It is proposed by the temporal power of the State;—to Catholics, in the civil capacity of subjects; with a view to their civil and social duties;—and in order to secure their fidelity to the State. All this is of a temporal nature. This, my Lords, is the test, by which the Oath ought to be tried, and its meaning ascertained.—Tried by this test, we appeal to your own judgments, whether any part of it, will not be found perfectly harmless and unobjectionable?

The frequent instances of the imprudent interference of the ecclesiastical authority, since the Reformation, to impede the attempts of the Catholics, to obtain relief from the laws enacted against them, and the fatal consequences of those attempts, both in the case of religion, and on the persons and fortunes of Catholics, should we think, have cautioned you against too much zeal on the present occasion.

In the eleventh year of queen Elizabeth, Pius Vth, fulminated his famous bull, *Regnans in Excelsis*, in which he not only excommunicated that princess, but declared her fallen from her sovereignty, and her subjects absolved from their allegiance; and forbid them, under pain of Anathema, to obey her laws. From this period, the English Catholics have to date the national odium and oppression, under which, they have ever since laboured.—From this period it has always been asserted, that Catholics held principles inconsistent with a Protestant government; and that they could never reconcile the duties, which they owe to the supreme Pastor of their Church, with the duties which they owe to their temporal sovereign and fellow-subjects. This solemn Act of the first Pastor, is always
appealed

appealed to by their enemies, as an indisputable proof of the traitorous principles of the flock.

The Catholic body however, continued true to government, in opposition to Papal authority; and although some individuals published seditious doctrines, or attempted criminal practices, yet the body at large never suffered themselves to be infected, and remained at once steady members of the Catholic Church, and dutiful subjects to the sovereign powers of their country.----Many of the priests made the most solemn professions of loyalty and duty, notwithstanding any commands from Rome, to oppose or disobey their lawful Queen. Among the questions proposed to the missionaries by the government of this land, one was, whether they would obey and defend their Queen, although the Bishop of Rome should command them to disobey and forsake her. *

Thus the Catholics began to recover from the national odium, brought upon them by the unwise and unjustifiable bull of Pius the Vth. Under James Ist, many circumstances intitled them to expect a great degree of relief and toleration.----But they were destined to be thrown by another unwise and unjustifiable Brief, under an accumulated weight of odium. After the infernal horrors of the gun-powder treason, James the Ist. caused the Oath of allegiance to be enacted in Parliament, as a test, by which his loyal Catholics, who were attached to their duties as subjects, might be discriminated from those other Catholics, who were under the predominancy of a foreign Power.---The Catholics in general, were ardent to take the Oath, and hoped by taking it, to restore themselves to their natural rights. Churchmen again interfered, and again blasted their hopes. Three successive Briefs of Paul the Vth condemned the Oath of Allegiance, as containing many things contrary to faith and hostile to salvation. On every subsequent attempt made by the Catholics of England, to prove that their religious principles were not inconsistent with the Civil government of their country: their efforts were quashed by these authoritative decisions.

In 1648, fifty of the most respectable noblemen and gentlemen of the English Catholics, subscribed the negative of the following propositions.

I.

That, the Pope or Church, hath power to absolve any person or persons from their obedience, to the civil and political government established, or to be established in this nation in civil and political affairs.

II.

That, by the command or dispensation of the Pope or Church, it is lawful to kill, destroy, or do any injury to any person or persons living within the King's dominions, because that such a person or persons are accused, condemned, censured, or excommunicated for error, schism, or heresy.

* See Mr. Dodd's Church History.

III.

That, it is lawful in itself, or by dispensation from the Pope, to break promise, or oath, made to any of the aforesaid persons, under pretence that they are heretics.

In what manner did the subscription of the negative of these propositions affect their faith as Catholics? Yet the authority of the Court of Rome was again brought forward to stop them. Several of their leading priests were consulted, and among others the illustrious Holden, then the ornament of the English clergy, and among the most eminent of the Sorbonne divines; but on this, and on every occasion, the authority of Paul V. was held out, to deter the English Catholics from pledging their integrity as men and citizens.

Your Lordships have seen the Irish Remonstrance. It is as harmless and as free from objection as a profession of allegiance can be. Yet it was censured: the Remonstrants were excommunicated, and several of them perished from want.---It adds to the harshness, not to say the cruelty of the interference of the Court of Rome upon these occasions, that by repeated declarations the Sorbonne, and other universities of France, reprobated the doctrine of the Pope's temporal power, and while these proceedings of the *prosperous* Church of France were tolerated, the same proceedings were uniformly and severely condemned among the *afflicted* Catholics of England and Ireland.*---Thus on the one hand, the nation refused to relax the severity of the laws against the Catholics, till they disavowed the Pope's temporal power;---the Court of Rome and her delegates on the other, forbid their doing it;---and by interfering to prevent them, left them to confiscations, national odium, persecution, and death. Their last effort was an advantage taken of a difficulty arising on the words heretical. The decisions of the Sorbonne, and the many luminous and unanswerable writings, by which the divines and lawyers of France had vindicated the independence of their Sovereigns, in concerns of a temporal nature, had convinced every thinking Catholic, that the claim of the Court of Rome, either in a direct or indirect power in temporals, could not be supported; and Rome herself saw that the time was come, in which, to enforce it in the dominions of other princes, even by her spiritual censures, would be unwise and impolitic. Still she continued to assert it in her own dominions; and still the Bull in *Cœna Domini*, (that eternal monument of the extent and extravagance of her claims and pretensions,) was continued to be read on every Maunday-Thurs-day, within the holy walls of the Church of St. Peter. With these dispositions it is not to be supposed, she would permit, if she could hinder, an express disavowal of it by the English Catholics.---Their loyalty was however so strong, that, she found it impossible to restrain them from it any longer. When unfortunately the word *heretical* afforded a pretence for it, such of her adherents as resided in the dominions of the Court, or in dominions under the influence of Rome, contended that the whole clause in James's Oath

* See Questions on the Oath of Allegiance, by a Catholic Gentleman in 1664.

of Allegiance, by which the deposing power is denied was unlawful: some went so far as to say, the deposing power was every thing, but an article of faith. This would not be endured by English ears. In England, therefore, the doctrine was admitted to be unlawful: it was stiled a novel doctrine, a false, a scandalous, an impious, a detestable doctrine, which deserved to be rejected, with horror, by Catholics. This was allowed, but it was said, that it was not pronounced in terms heretical, by the scripture or any council. It was not, therefore, in the scholastic sense, of the word, heretical. From this it was inferred, that the Catholics could not swear it was heretical. This strange difficulty was held out as a terror, to restrain Catholics from avowing their fidelity to their king and their country, and unfortunately had too powerful an operation.* But this last effort of ingenuity at length failed of effect. Twice the Sorbonne were consulted, and twice they determined, that, the Catholics might, nay, that they ought, to take the Oath with the qualifying term heretical.

At length in 1682, came out the famous Declaration of the Gallican Clergy.

From that time sincere English Catholics saw, that the difficulties of some of their ancestors, had been ill grounded, and that they had been, for near a century and a half, the victims of Papal encroachments upon the civil rights of their country. But an opportunity did not soon present itself of justifying their tenets: in 1775, a favourable prospect seemed opening for the relief of the Catholics of England and Ireland. It was then that Sorbonne was anew consulted by the Irish Catholics, and returned their answer, in perfect conformity with the declaration of the Gallican clergy in 1682, and with the answer of their own Faculty in 1680.

In 1778, when the prejudices of darker times were removed, the Catholics of England and Ireland embraced with ardour, an opportunity of declaring the purity and integrity of their political principles. Their bishops co-operated. In vain had Paul Vth declared the Oath of Allegiance irreconcilable with faith and salvation:—in vain, had he forbidden the Catholics to take that, or any similar oath:—in vain, had the authority of preceding Popes been urged to deter them:—in vain, had Cardinal-Protectors and Nuncios pretended, that, former attempts of securing Allegiance to Protestant kings against the powers of the Pope, was a corruption of Catholic faith; in vain, had they asserted, that signing a pledge of civil submission to temporal government, would do more hurt than all the former persecutions of heretics.†—All this formidable authority vanished, when the Catholics were permitted by governments in an awful moment of the Empire, to declare their sincere, unfeigned principles. Their religious persuasion conscientiously attached them to the communion of the Catholic Church and Apostolic See, but as subjects and citizens, they knew no sovereign, and acknowledged no laws, but the sovereign and laws of their country. We repeat, and we confidently repeat, that, with the exception of the

* See Cressy's Apologetical Letter, and Stillingfleet's Answer.

† See the Letters of de Vecchiis Rospighosi and Barbarini.

epithetical qualification, the Oath of 1778 is virtually and in effect, the same as the Oath of Allegiance proffered by James the 1st.

If under Paul V. and Urban VIII. and Innocent X. and Alexander VII. the English and Irish Catholics had slighted, as they did in 1778, those decisions of authority, which extended its empire over temporal concerns, and therefore to objects not within its competency,—would they not have prevented the most dismal misfortunes to themselves and their posterity; and have rescued their religion from the most slanderous and abominable reproach? Had the better spirit of 1778 prevailed under Paul V. how much would the hatred and oppression of Catholics been diminished? In 1778 the unjust encroachments of authority were repelled, and the example then set will be our justification, at present, unless it be proved, that, in pledging our integrity, as men and citizens, to our country, we have really renounced some articles of catholic faith and communion.

The relief obtained in 1778 was extremely partial, and the oath, then required by Government, though adequate to the purpose of securing our loyalty, in a critical conjuncture, was not deemed by the nation a sufficient test of our social and political principles. Ancient animosities revived, and the remembrance of the horrors of 1780, will long bear testimony with what violence they burst forth. English Protestants still suspected, that, we maintained principles dangerous to society, and totally repugnant to political and civil liberty. In every publication of alarmed zeal we were called upon, by our prejudiced fellow-subjects, to renounce these dangerous principles: we were desired to renounce them consistently with our adherence to the Catholic faith. Even moderate Protestants, who expressed a desire to extend to us the blessings of toleration, insisted on this previous renunciation of imputed principles*, when we were directed at a General Meeting to apply for a repeal of the penal laws, the first requisition from the Minister to us was to state the extent of the dispensing power. For this purpose, the answers of foreign universities were procured at his request. An instrument of protestation was then presented to us, containing the objections of Protestants and the answers, which they declared would be satisfactory. We were called upon to sign this instrument,—CLERGY AND LAITY, WE SIGNED.—Are there among us persons capable of receding from their signatures and prostituting their honor?

This protestation was converted into the form of an oath. Shall we refuse to swear, when called upon by our country, what we most solemnly protested under our hand-writing? The violation of an oath may accumulate the guilt of perjury on prevarication; but veracity is equally sacred, whether a protestation be made upon honour, or upon oath. *Tantum in te sit veri amor, ut quidquid dixeris, id juratum putes*, was the exhortation of a Father of the church, and he must be destitute of christian sincerity, who thinks he is not equally bound to tell the truth without disguise, when called upon to make a solemn asseveration, as if he had an oath officially tendered. To recede therefore from any part of the Protestation

* See the Preface to the 4th Edition of Comber's Friendly Advice to the Roman Catholics of England.

would be a flagrant violation of veracity; a criminal prevarication; a mortal wound to the integrity of Catholics, and consequently an everlasting confirmation of the prejudice of Protestants, that our religion permits us to use duplicity and equivocation. Is it into this dishonour we are exhorted, nay required, by your Lordships, to plunge? Does not authority exerted to effect this purpose, tend to destruction not to edification? and if such an authority were submitted to, would not an undue respect for the ministers of religion involve the ruin of religion itself?—Have your Lordships maturely weighed these momentous consequences?

In the Protestation what have the Catholics renounced in a body, which has not been uniformly declared by their best writers, to be only aspersions on our religion. Compare the Protestation with the writings of our best controvertists; compare it particularly with the standard works of Mr. Gother and the account of catholic principles; compare it with the declarations of Catholics long before the Reformation began; will not these respectable authorities prove, that our principles are the principles of the wisest of our ancestors? Did not our ancestors ever maintain, that the crown of England was a sovereign, imperial and independent crown? That the laws of England could never be altered, but by the legislature of England? That all encroachments of foreign powers, whether civil or ecclesiastical, ought to be resisted, and consequently, that the spiritual authority acknowledged by Catholics to reside in the church, could not affect or interfere either with the prerogatives of the crown or the personal rights of the subject.

As to acknowledging no infallibility in the Pope, is it not expressly said, in the Catholic principles, that this is no tenet of our faith? but if no tenet of our faith, and we do not even believe it as an opinion, why should we be restrained from declaring, that we do not acknowledge it? especially, as it is the controul of this principle, which, above all other considerations, excites the diffidence of our protestant fellow subjects. Your Lordships cannot but recollect the immortal Raport of the Bishop of Tournay*, before the clergy of France in 1682. The following passage must have arrested your attention.

“ Si cette infallibilité étoit bien fondée; il faudroit mourir pour la soutenir; et à quelque éloignement de l’église qu’ elle porte nos freres séparés, il ne seroit jamais permis de la dissimuler. Mais, en vérité, étant visible qu’elle n’est appuyée ni sur l’écriture, ni sur la tradition; et étant certain d’ailleurs, que rien ne retient si fortement les Protestans dans le schisme, que la prevention dans la quelle ils sont, que nous nous faisons un point de religion de cette infallibilité, de cette independance des canons, de cette monarchie absolue, & de cet enorme pouvoir, que quelques theologiens, de ces derniers tems, ont attribué, au Pape, contre ce que l’écriture, & toute la tradition nous enseignent, n’est il pas de notre devoir, & de notre charité pastorale, de tirer enfin le rideau, & de declarer nos vrais sentimens à toute la terre! ”

* Monsieur de Choiseul.

“ If this infallibility was well founded, it would be our duty to die for the support of it, and however great might be the distance from us, to which it forced those of our brethren who have separated from us, it could not be lawful even to dissemble it. But in truth it being evident, that it is founded neither on scripture nor tradition, and it being also certain, that nothing tends so much to keep protestants in the state of schism, as their prepossession, that this infallibility, and this independence of the canons, this absolute monarchy, this enormous power, which some divines of modern times have attributed to the Pope in contradiction to gospel and tradition, are articles of our faith, do not our duty and our pastoral charity require from us to lift up at length the veil, and declare our real sentiments to the whole world?”

Your Lordships well know, that many attempts have been made to extend the Pope's infallibility not only to dogmatical questions of faith, but even to particular judgments concerning facts; so that, however erroneous or ill-grounded the judgments might be, still the faithful were bound to honour them by their submission.

It was this extravagance, that diminished the respect due to the authority of the Pope, even when moving within his own sphere as first pastor of the church, and undoubtedly, carried to this excess, there cannot be a more pernicious doctrine than that of Papal infallibility. For if the Pope's judgment be irreformable, and he should, like Paul V. declare, that an oath of civil allegiance is a violation of Catholic faith, to what dire extremities would the faithful be reduced? They could not fulfil the double obligation imposed upon them by their Saviour, of rendering to God what belongs to God, and to Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar; they could not be good subjects and steady Catholics.

In answer to this, it is said, that the Catholic confines the infallibility to matters merely of a spiritual nature; and therefore, if the Pope undertakes to pronounce in concerns of a temporal nature, the Catholic, though he admits his spiritual infallibility, is under no obligation of attending to him. But then, says the Protestant, if the Pope assumes to pronounce a temporal concern to be a concern of a spiritual nature, is not the Catholic bound to submit his judgment to that of the Pope?

Thus Cardinal Bellarmine is known to have been an advocate for the Pope's indirect power in temporals, and to have held the contrary opinion to be every thing but heresy. He certainly has on his side numbers of Transalpine divines. Here then is an opinion of the most deleterious tendency; an opinion, which strikes at the root of all established government, yet pronounced by a Cardinal of unquestionable learning and abilities as probable in the highest degree, and approaching nearly to an article of faith. Let us advance but one degree further, and suppose this Cardinal to be elected Pope, and to persuade himself, and to proclaim to the faithful, that the article in question is of a spiritual nature, and of faith:—the mischief is done.

All this to a Catholic may, and yet we cannot well see how it can, appear ideal. But to a Protestant it must appear possible, and when he reflects on the Acts of the Gregories, the Innocents, the Bonifaces, and the Pauls, and particularly on the famous bull of Pius the Vth, that direful cause of the calamities of England, and the bull of Sixtus Quintus, that direful cause of the calamities of France, it must appear to him highly probable. If therefore we do not believe the Pope to be infallible, even in religious matters, without the consent of the Church, (and by the Protestation we have declared we do not,) why should we not, for the satisfaction of our Protestant countrymen, declare upon our oath, that we acknowledge no infallibility in the Pope; and thus, by avowing our real sentiments on the principle itself, prevent every possibility of being suspected to hold the pernicious consequences which must necessarily follow, when the principle is extended to that undue and dangerous latitude, to which it has sometimes been carried? "Wonderful it is," we say with Cardinal Turrecremata, "that, when the Popes speak themselves of their own power with moderation, some little doctors, (*doctorculi*) exceeding all bounds of reason in their adulation, seem to equal them to God." "Thus," says Cardinal Cusa, "while they exalt the Holy See too high, they in fact depress and confound it." Of these Pius the Vth used to complain, and said, they had done too much mischief to the Holy See. We finish with the words of Melchior Cano;—Those who rashly, and at all rates defend the Pope's right of judgment on every subject, do not serve his cause. No lying, no adulation does Peter require from us.—*Petrus non eget mendacio nostro, nostra adulatione non eget.**

My Lords, we mean not to discuss with you every article of the Protestation. The Authors we have referred to are sufficient warrants. Nor is it a duty incumbent upon us, to enter into a justification of each separate position.—The instrument came to us signed by the greatest ecclesiastical authority among the Catholics of this kingdom. Were the body of our clergy, our bishops and our priests, ignorant of the grounds of their religion? Have they all concurred to sign away their faith?

There is but one observation more, that we will urge. The word, heretical, has been mentioned as inadmissible. You recollect the various decisions of Sorbonne and the other universities of France, against Sanctiarelus and Malagola. The doctrine is declared novel, false, scandalous, contrary to the word of God, &c. Is it not then heretical? Consistently with their former decrees, and with the doctrine of the Gallican Church, the Sorbonne hath twice, as we have already mentioned, assured the Catholics of these dominions, that they might abjure it, as heretical. But why recur to foreign authorities? They have their Bossuet and their Choiseul: we have our Challoner and our Gother. Both these respectable persons thought the proposition in question heretical, otherwise they would not have placed the following

* Vide Caron's Dedication to Alexander VII.

curse, at the end of one of the most popular books of controversy among the English Catholics, "Curled is he who believes there is authority in the Church, Pope, Councils, or Priests, which can give leave to commit sin, depose, or murder sovereigns, Amen."*

These, my Lords, are our principles. A detail of our proceedings we have inserted in our letter to the Vicar Apostolic of the London District, of the 2d instant, to which we refer. To the above effect we had the honour of expressing ourselves to the Vicars Apostolic of the London and Northern Districts, at our conference on Tuesday, the 8th instant. You, my Lords, bishops of Acanthos and Centuria, will recollect, that from the time of the opening of the business, you insisted on there being no necessity of giving the reasons of your censures.—But, upon being greatly pressed, you mentioned some of the passages you objected to; and a discussion ensued on the meaning of the word, "persons," which involved in it, the material question, whether the words of the Oath were to be taken in their scholastic or ordinary sense. You will recollect our offer to submit to the opinion of two civil lawyers, two common lawyers, and two Catholic lawyers, whether by the whole of the clauses respecting the right of interference, any thing could be meant to affect the rights of conscience, or the spiritual effects of spiritual censures? That you, my Lord, bishop of Centuria, desired it to be inserted in the minutes, that you gave no answer to this proposition; and you, my Lord, bishop of Acanthos, said you had no objection, but would not stand to their decisions, and wished the above construction inserted in the Oath†. Your Lordships will recollect, with what candor and harmony, with what a tendency

* Vide Papist Misrepresented, and Represented again. Nineteenth Edition.

† Though the Vicars Apostolic did not accede to this proposition, it was afterwards thought advisable to state a Case upon the point in question for the opinion of Mr. Hill, his Majesty's Premier Serjeant at Law, the first lawyer at the bar in point of office and precedence;—and confessedly inferior to none in legal learning, and particularly eminent for his profound knowledge of the Civil and Ecclesiastical Constitution of this Country. The Case and the Opinion are copied below.—It has been objected, that the point is of a spiritual nature, and none, therefore, but a Catholic Priest is capable of judging of it, and that the opinion of the lowest Priest in the Church is to be preferred to that of the most learned among the Laity, in spiritual concerns.

But this, surely, is not a fair statement of the matter. In the Case laid before the Serjeant, the question is not made on any point of doctrine. The divine commission and spiritual authority of the Church, and the spiritual headship of the Pope, are there expressly admitted to be tenets of the Catholic faith. The point stated for his consideration does not relate to their existence, or extent. The question submitted to him is, Whether the words of the Oath are intended to amount to a denial of this spiritual authority and supremacy,—or to be confined to a denial of the Church having a right to interfere in temporal concerns, or to use temporal means to enforce her spiritual censures. When the import of a legislative Act is fixed, a Priest may judge of its casuistry;—but while a doubt arises on its import and meaning, the legislature must be the only judge of its own meaning and intention; and till the legislature speaks, those are the best judges of them, who, by their studies, habits of life, and official situations, are most conversant with, and must be therefore supposed to understand best, the language of the legislature.

The

a tendency to an amicable explanation, the discussion was going on, between Mr. Barnard, (of whose candor, explicitness, and moderation, we shall ever retain a most grateful remembrance,) on your side, and Sir Henry Englefield on ours.—When you, my Lord, bishop of Acanthos, rose from your seat, and said, that all this discussion was of no consequence; the question was, whether we would submit or not? This unexpected requisition, and

The assertion, that the opinion of the lowest Priest in the Church is to be preferred to that of the most learned among the Laity, in spiritual concerns, is, at least, questionable.—Even in the discussion of subjects merely spiritual, Religion has received, without a blush, the services of Laymen. Surely there have been Priests, whose opinions, or whose writings, are not to be preferred to those of Minutius Felix, Lactantius, Tillemont, the two Barclays, or even our own illustrious Woodhead.

T H E C A S E.

A DOUBT has arisen in the minds of some Catholics, whether some parts of the Oath, particularly the clause in red ink, do not amount to a denial of the Spiritual Rights, with which, according to their religious tenets, the Church and her Ministers, and particularly the Pope, is invested.—As those of preaching the Faith—administering the Sacraments—ordaining the Ministers of the Church—punishing by spiritual Censures, &c.—If it amount to a denial of the Pope, the Church, and her Ministers, being invested with the Rights of this nature, it is an Oath which a Catholic cannot take consistently with his religious Principles.

On the other hand, it is contended, that it is not meant to deny by the Oath any Spiritual Right of the Church, but merely the Right of the Church to interfere in temporal concerns, or to use temporal means to enforce her spiritual censures.

Two Propositions are admitted on all sides.

The one, that the Church is invested with a complete authority in spiritual concerns; and a power to enforce that authority by the spiritual means of censures; and that the Pope is the Spiritual Head of the Church.

The other, that neither the Church nor the Pope have, either directly or indirectly, any temporal power in this kingdom.

THE QUESTION, therefore, is, Whether the Oath in question, and particularly that part of it, which is written in red ink, is a denial of the Spiritual Authority of the Church, or the Spiritual Supremacy of the Pope.

No Form of Civil Government, nor any System of Laws was instituted by Christ or his Apostles, nor any Commission granted to their Successor, to enforce the Christian Doctrine by Temporal Power. The Authority of the Pope and the Church is derived from them. The words of the Oath do not import a denial of their having this Authority: they only deny their having Temporal Power, or a Right to enforce their Spiritual Authority by Temporal Power. This is all the Party who takes the Oath, will, or can be understood to swear or to assert, when he swears, in the words of the Oath, *that they have no Jurisdiction or Authority, that can either directly or indirectly affect or interfere with the Independence, Sovereignty, Laws, Constitution, or Government thereof, or with the Rights, Liberties, Persons or Properties of the People of the said Realm, or any of them;*—therefore, I think the Oath is not a denial of the Spiritual Authority of the Church, or the Supremacy of the Pope.

Lincoln's-Inn, February 18, 1791.

* The words in Italics are those which were written in red ink.

G. H I L L,

particularly

"Whether the Committee intended to submit not to proceed further in the business of
"the Bill, without the approbation of the Bishops?"

" We have the greatest respect for episcopal authority, and are always disposed to obey its decisions, when applied to proper objects, and confined within proper limitation.

R R A T U M.

Note to Page 28, Line 4, of the
of Protestation of the Catho-
Committee to the Three Vicars
olic. *delete* the word. *Tillemont*

In the Note to *Page 28, Line 4*, of the Letter of Protestation of the Catholic Committee to the Three Vicars Apostolic, *dele* the word, *Tillemont*.

CHA. BERINGTON, STOURTON,
JOS. WILKS, PETRE,
H. C. ENGLEFIELD,
JOHN THROCKMORTON,
JOHN TOWNLEY,
THOMAS HORNBY.

Notwithstanding this declaration; we still request, your Lordships to say, whether, you will suggest any addition or qualifying explanation, which can be admitted consistently with the instrument of Protestation, signed by the Apostolic Vicars, more than two hundred of the clergy, and almost every respectable Catholic in England, and we will exert our best endeavours in negotiating the admission of such an addition or qualifying explanation.

CHA. BERINGTON,	STOURTON,
JOS. WILKS.	PETRE.
	H C. ENGLEFIELD,
	JOHN THROCKMORTON,
	JOHN TOWNELEY,
	THOMAS HORNYOLD.

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a tendency to an amicable explanation, the discussion was going on, between Mr. Barnard, (of whose candor, explicitness, and moderation, we shall ever retain a most grateful remembrance,) on your side, and Sir Henry Englefield on ours.—When you, my Lord, bishop of Acanthos, rose from your seat, and said, that all this discussion was of no consequence; the question was, whether we would submit or not? This unexpected requisition, and

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The other, that neither the Church nor the Pope have, either directly or indirectly, any temporal power in this kingdom.

THE QUESTION, therefore, is, Whether the Oath in question, and particularly that part of it, which is written in red ink, is a denial of the Spiritual Authority of the Church, or the Spiritual Supremacy of the Pope.

No Form of Civil Government, nor any System of Laws was instituted by Christ or his Apostles, nor any Commission granted to their Successor, to enforce the Christian Doctrine by Temporal Power. The Authority of the Pope and the Church is derived from them. The words of the Oath do not import a denial of their having this Authority: they only deny their having Temporal Power, or a Right to enforce their Spiritual Authority by Temporal Power. This is all the Party who takes the Oath, will, or can be understood to swear or to assert, when he swears, in the words of the Oath, *that they have no Jurisdiction or Authority, that can either directly or indirectly affect or interfere with the Independence, Sovereignty, Laws, Constitution, or Government thereof, or with the Rights, Liberties, Persons or Properties of the People of the said Realm, or any of them;*—therefore, I think the Oath is not a denial of the Spiritual Authority of the Church, or the Supremacy of the Pope.

Lincoln's-Inn, February 18, 1791.

* The words in Italics are those which were written in red ink,

G. H I L L.

particularly

particularly the mode and the time, in which it was made, struck us with astonishment, and we requested to have your requisition in writing. It was accordingly committed to writing, and we withdrew into another room to give our answer.

Your question was,

" Whether the Committee intended to submit not to proceed further in the business of the Bill, without the approbation of the Bishops?"

To the above question our reply was,

" We have the greatest respect for episcopal authority, and are always disposed to obey its decisions, when applied to proper objects, and confined within proper limitation. But we say with St. Leo, *Manet Petri privilegium ubicumque ex ipsius æquitate fertur iudicium*. The requisition of submission, made by the two Apostolic Vicars, appears in the present instance not grounded in equity. No proof of the proposed Oath's containing any thing contrary to faith or morals, has been produced; and we cannot acquiesce in the requisition, without continuing, encreasing, and confirming the prejudices against the faith and moral character of the Catholics, and the scandal and oppression under which they labour in this kingdom. We therefore refuse to submit to the above requisition, and we give your Lordships notice, that we shall appeal from it to all the Catholic Churches in the universe, and especially to the first of Catholic Churches, the Apostolical See, rightly informed."

Signed by

CHA. BERINGTON,	STOURTON,
JOS. WILKS,	PETRE,
	H. C. ENGLEFIELD,
	JOHN THROCKMORTON,
	JOHN TOWNELEY,
	THOMAS HORNOLD.

Notwithstanding this declaration, we still request, your Lordships to say, whether, you will suggest any addition or qualifying explanation, which can be admitted consistently with the instrument of Protestation, signed by the Apostolic Vicars, more than two hundred of the clergy, and almost every respectable Catholic in England, and we will exert our best endeavours in negotiating the admission of such an addition or qualifying explanation.

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CHA. BERINGTON,	STOURTON,
JOS. WILKS,	PETRE,
	H. C. ENGLEFIELD,
	JOHN THROCKMORTON,
	JOHN TOWNELEY,
	THOMAS HORNOLD.

This our answer and request we delivered to your Lordships. After some further discussion, you, my Lord, bishop of Centuria, said you intended it should have been an amicable conference, and moved that the question and answer might be thrown into the fire. You, my Lord bishops of Acanthos and Centuria, were asked, if you would retract the requisition, and both refused to retract it.

Therefore, my Lords Bishop of Rama, Vicar Apostolic of the Western District;—my Lord, bishop of Acanthos, Vicar Apostolic of the Northern District;—my Lord, bishop of Centuria, Vicar Apostolic of the Southern District;—

YOUR LORDSHIPS HAVING BROUGHT MATTERS TO THIS POINT:

Convinced, that we have not been misled by our clergy;—convinced, that we have not departed from the principles of our ancestors;—convinced, that we have not violated any article of Catholic faith or communion;—WE, the Catholic Committee, whose names are here under written, for ourselves, and for those in whose trusts we have acted, do hereby, before God, solemnly protest, and call upon God to witness our protest, against your Lordships' Encyclical Letters of the 19th day of October 1789 and the 21st day of January last, and every clause, article, determination, matter, and thing therein respectively contained: as imprudent, arbitrary and unjust; as a total misrepresentation of the nature of the Bills to which they respectively refer, and the Oaths therein respectively contained; and our conduct relating thereto respectively;—as encroaching on our natural, civil and religious rights, inculcating principles hostile to society and government, and the constitution and laws of the British empire: as derogatory from the allegiance we owe to the state, and the settlement of the crown: and as tending to continue, encrease and confirm the prejudices against the faith and moral character of the Catholics, and the scandal and oppression under which they labour in this kingdom.—In the same manner we do hereby solemnly protest, and call upon God to witness, this our solemn protest, against all proceedings had, or hereafter to be had, in consequence of, or grounded upon, your Lordships' said Encyclical letters, or either of them, or any representation of the Bills or Oaths therein respectively referred to, given or to be given by your Lordships or any of you.

And, from your Lordships' said Encyclical Letters, and all proceedings, had or hereafter to be had, in consequence of, or grounded upon, the same, or either of them, or in consequence of, or grounded upon, any representations of the said Bills, or Oaths, or either of them, given or to be given by your Lordships, or any of you; we do hereby
appeal

appeal, and call on God to witness our appeal, for the purity and integrity of our religious principles, to all the Catholic Churches in the universe, and especially to the first of Catholic Churches, the Apostolical See, rightly informed.

CHARLES BERINGTON.

STOURTON.

JOS. WILKS.

PETRE.

HENRY CHARLES ENGLEFIELD.

JOHN LAWSON.

JOHN THROCKMORTON.

WILLIAM FERMOR.

JOHN TOWNELEY.

THOMAS HORNYOLD.

The Oath of Allegiance and Abjuration, and of Protestation and Declaration.

I *A. B.* do sincerely promise and swear, That I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance
 " to Majesty and I do truly
 " and sincerely acknowledge, profess, testify, and declare in my Conscience, before God and
 " the World, that our Sovereign is lawful and rightful
 " of this Realm, and of all other Majesty's Dominions thereunto belonging:
 " And I do solemnly and sincerely declare, that I do believe, in my Conscience, that not any
 " Descendants of the Person who pretended to be Prince of *Wales* during the Life of the
 " late King *James* the Second, and, after his Decease, pretended to be, and took upon him-
 " self the Stile and Title of King of *England* by the Name of *James* the Third, or of *Scot-*
 " *land* by the Name of *James* the Eighth, or the Stile and Title of King of *Great Britain*,
 " hath any Right or Title whatsoever to the Crown of this Realm, or any Dominions there-
 " unto belonging: And I do renounce, refuse, and abjure any Allegiance or Obedience to
 " any of them: And I do swear, that I will bear Faith and true Allegiance to
 " Majesty and will defend to the utmost of my
 " Power against all traitorous Conspiracies and Attempts whatsoever, which shall be made
 " against Person, Crown, or Dignity; And I will do my utmost Endeavour to
 " disclose and make known to Majesty
 " and Successors, all Treasons, and traitorous Conspiracies, which I shall know
 " to be against : And I do faithfully and fully promise, to the utmost of my
 " Power, to support, maintain, and defend the Succession of the Crown against the Descen-
 " dants of the said *James*, and against all other Persons whatsoever; which Succession, by an
 " Act intituled, *An Act for the further Limitation of the Crown, and better securing the Rights*
 " *and Liberties of the Subject*, is, and stands, limited to the Princess *Sophia*, Electress and
 " Duchess Dowager of *Hanover*, and the Heirs of her Body, being Protestants: And I do
 " swear, that I do, from my Heart, abhor, detest, and abjure, as impious and heretical, that
 " damnable Doctrine and Position, that Princes excommunicated by the Pope, or by Autho-
 " rity of the See of *Rome*, may be deposed or murdered, by their Subjects, or any other
 " Persons whomsoever: And I do protest and declare, and do solemnly swear it to be my
 " most firm and sincere Opinion, Belief and Persuasion, That neither the Pope, nor any
 " Prelate

" Prelate or Priest, nor any Assembly of Prelates or Priests, nor any Ecclesiastical Power
 " whatsoever, can absolve the Subjects of this Realm, or any of them, from their Allegiance
 " to his said Majesty: And that no Foreign Church, Prelate or Priest, or Assembly of Pre-
 " lates or Priests, or Ecclesiastical Power whatsoever, hath, or ought to have, any Jurisdic-
 " tion or Authority whatsoever within this Realm, that can, directly or indirectly, affect
 " or interfere with, the Independence, Sovereignty, Laws, Constitution, or Government
 " thereof, or the Rights, Liberties, Persons, or Properties of the People of the said Realm,
 " or any of them: And that no Person can be absolved from any Sin, nor any Sin whatever
 " be forgiven, at the Pleasure of any Pope, or of any Priest, or of any Person whomsoever;
 " but that Sorrow for past Offences, Resolution to avoid future Guilt, and Atonement to
 " God and the injured Neighbour, are indispensably requisite to obtain Forgiveness of Sin:
 " And that no Breach of Faith with, or Injury to, or Hostility against, any Person whom-
 " soever, can ever be justified, by Reason, or under Pretence, that such Person is an Here-
 " tic or an Infidel: And that neither the Pope, nor any Prelate, nor any Priest, nor any
 " Assembly of Prelates or Priests, nor any Ecclesiastical Power whatever, can, at any Time,
 " dispense with, or absolve Me from, the Obligations of this Oath, or of any other Oath, or
 " of any Compact whatsoever; And I do also, in my Conscience, declare, and solemnly
 " swear, That I acknowledge no Infallibility in the Pope: And all these Things I do plainly
 " and sincerely declare, acknowledge, and swear, according to these express Words by Me
 " spoken, and according to the plain and ordinary Sense of the same Words, without any
 " Equivocation, mental Evasion, or secret Reservation whatsoever: And I do make the
 " aforesaid Protestation, Declaration, Recognition, Acknowledgment, Abjuration, Renun-
 " ciation, Promise, and Oath, heartily, willingly, and truly, upon the true Faith of a Chri-
 " stian. So help me God."

E R R A T U M.

In the 37th Line of the 3d page of the Letter written by the Catholic Committee, to the
 Catholics of England, dated, 25 November 1789, *dele* the word *then*.

